

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

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FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2296

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE GUATEMALA CITY 1206

IMMEDIATE NIACT

E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: PINT

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT ARANA PUBLICLY APPEALS FOR ELECTION OF COALITION
CANDIDATE LAUGERUD AS HIS SUCCESSOR

1. SUMMARY: IN NATIONWIDE TV AND RADIO SPEECH MAR 1 PRESIDENT ARANA
APPEALED TO GUATEMALANS TO VOTE FOR PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE KJELL
LAUGERUD. ARANA EXPRESSED CONCERN ABOUT "THREAT OF SOCIALIST
REGIME," BUT AVOID SPECIFICALLY LABELLING OPPOSITION CANDIDATES AS
SOCIALIST OR COMMUNIST. PRESIDENT STATED GOG WOULD NOT ENGAGE IN
ANY TACTICS DESIGNED TO DEPRIVE CITIZENS OF RIGHTS OF SUFFRAGE,
BUT ALSO WARNED THAT GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT PERMIT ANY CANDIDATE TO
DECLARE HIMSELF VICTOR PRIOR TO OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT OF ELECTION
RESULTS. SPEECH TOPPED OFF CAMPAIGN CHARACTERIZED BY MUCH GREATER
IDENTIFICATION OF INCUMBENT PRESIDENT WITH OFFICIAL CANDIDATE THAN
WAS CASE IN 1966 AND 1970. PRESIDENT HAS UNEQUIVOCALLY THROWN
FULL SUPPORT OF HIS PERSONAL AND OFFICIAL PRESTIGE BEHIND LAUGERUD.
END SUMMARY.

2. IN NATIONWIDE TV ADDRESS MAR 1 PRESIDENT ARANA TOLD GUATEMALANS
THAT AS PRESIDENT HE APPEALED TO THEM TO VOTE FOR "THOSE CANDIDATES
WHO ASSURE THE CONTINUATION OF WORKS I HAVE REALIZED," AND AS A
CITIZEN HE APPEALED TO THEM TO VOTE FOR GENERAL KJELL LAUGERUD.
THE PRESIDENT STATED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT ENGAGE IN ANY
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"TRICKS OR DEVICES" DESIGNED TO DEPRIVE CITIZENS OF THE RIGHT

OF SUFFRAGE, BUT ALSO WARNED THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT PERMIT ANY CANDIDATE TO DECLARE HIMSELF VICTOR PRIOR TO THE OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT BASED UPON THE NATIONWIDE VOTE COUNT.

3. ARANA STATED HE WAS WORRIED ABOUT THE "THREAT OF A SOCIALIST REGIME" WHICH WOULD DESTROY GUATEMALA'S DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, BUT HE AVOIDED SPECIFICALLY LABELLING ANY OF THE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES AS "SOCIALIST" AND NEVER EVEN IMPLIED THAT THEY WERE "COMMUNIST." GUATEMALA NEEDS PEACEFUL AND PROGRESSIVE CHANGE, THE PRESIDENT COMMENTED, BUT MUST REJECT VIOLENT CHANGE. THE PRESIDENT PRAISED LAUGERUD AS REPRESENTATIVE OF THE "NE MILITARY SPIRIT" IN HIS "CLEAR AND UNEQUIVOCAL UNDERSTANDING THAT OUR INSTITUTIONS MUST BE REFORMED."

4. RECALLING THAT HE WAS ELECTED WITH A MANDATE TO END THE LEFTIST TERRORISM WHICH THREATENED THE NATION, ARANA SAID THAT HE HAD CARRIED OUT THAT MANDATE BY CONFRONTING BOTH THE ARMED MANIFESTATIONS OF VIOLENCE AND ITS SOCIO-ECONOMIC ROOTS. THE LAST FOUR YEARS HAVE BEEN MADE DIFFICULT, THE PRESIDENT COMMENTED, BY THE SERIOUS EFFECTS OF INTERNATIONAL EVENTS ON GUATEMALA'S ALREADY LIMITED RESOURCES. ARANA NAMED THE DEVALUATION OF THE DOLLAR, THE US WHEAT SALE TO THE USSR AND THE PETROLEUM CRISIS PRECIPITATED BY THE MID-EAST WAR AS THE THREE MOST IMPORTANT ECONOMIC EVENTS. THE PRESIDENT CHARGED THAT ANYONE WHO DENIED THE INTER-ACTION OF THE WORLD ECONOMY LACKED THE CAPABILITY TO SERVE IN ANY PUBLIC POSITION, EVEN THOUGH THAT INDIVIDUAL MIGHT HAVE A DOCTORATE DEGREE IN ECONOMICS (A DIG AT FUENTES MOHR).

5. THE PRESIDENT ACCUSED THOSE WHO HAVE ATTACKED HIS GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES OF ENGAGING IN SELF-SERVING, IRRESPONSIBLE DEMOGOGUERY. ARANA ASSERTED THAT THE "PRINCIPAL LOCAL LEADER" OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY (A REFERENCE TO RENE DE LEON) LACKED THE MORAL AUTHORITY TO CENSURE THE GOVERNMENT IN VIEW OF THE GOVERNMENT "SUPPORT" WHICH THE DCG LEADER HAD REQUESTED AND RECEIVED. TURNING TO "THE OPPOSITION'S PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE" (RIOS MONTT), ARANA RECALLED THAT DURING THREE YEARS OF SERVICE IN HIS GOVERNMENT RIOS NEVER HAD MADE ANY CRITICISMS. THE PRESIDENT ALSO RECALLED THAT HE HAD ASSISTED THE MAYOR OF GUATEMALA (COLOM ARGUETA) IN OBTAINING A GOG GUARANTEE OF MUNICIPAL LOANS AND ASKED, "WHERE ARE THE RKS WHICH SHOULD HAVE BEEN MADE WITH THAT MONEY."

6. COMMENT: ARANA'S SPEECH, WHICH WAS ALSO CARRIED ON NATIONAL RADIO, TOPS OFF A CAMPAIGN CHARACTERIZED BY MUCH GREATER IDENTIFICATION BETWEEN THE INCUMBENT PRESIDENT AND THE OFFICIAL CANDIDATE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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THAN WAS THE CASE DURING THE 1966 AND 1970 ELECTIONS. THE PRESIDENT UNEQUIVOCALLY HAS THROWN THE FULL WEIGHT OF HIS PERSONAL AND OFFICIAL PRESTIGE BEHIND LAUGERUD. WHILE SPEECH IS NOT LIKELY TO CHANGE MUCH OF THE CITY VOTE, IT MAY GIVE A LAST MINUTE BOOST TO LAUGERUD IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. PRESIDENT'S PROMISE THAT GOG WILL NOT ENGAGE IN ELECTORAL CHICANERY, WHETHER FULFILLED OR NOT, MAY WELL CALM POLITICAL TEMPER DURING NEXT FEW DAYS. HIS STATEMENT THAT GOG WILL NOT PERMIT PREMATURE SELF-PROCLAIMED VICTORY IS AIMED DIRECTLY AT

RIOS MONTT, WHO HAS ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTIONS TO DO JUST THAT.
END COMMENT.
MELOY

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